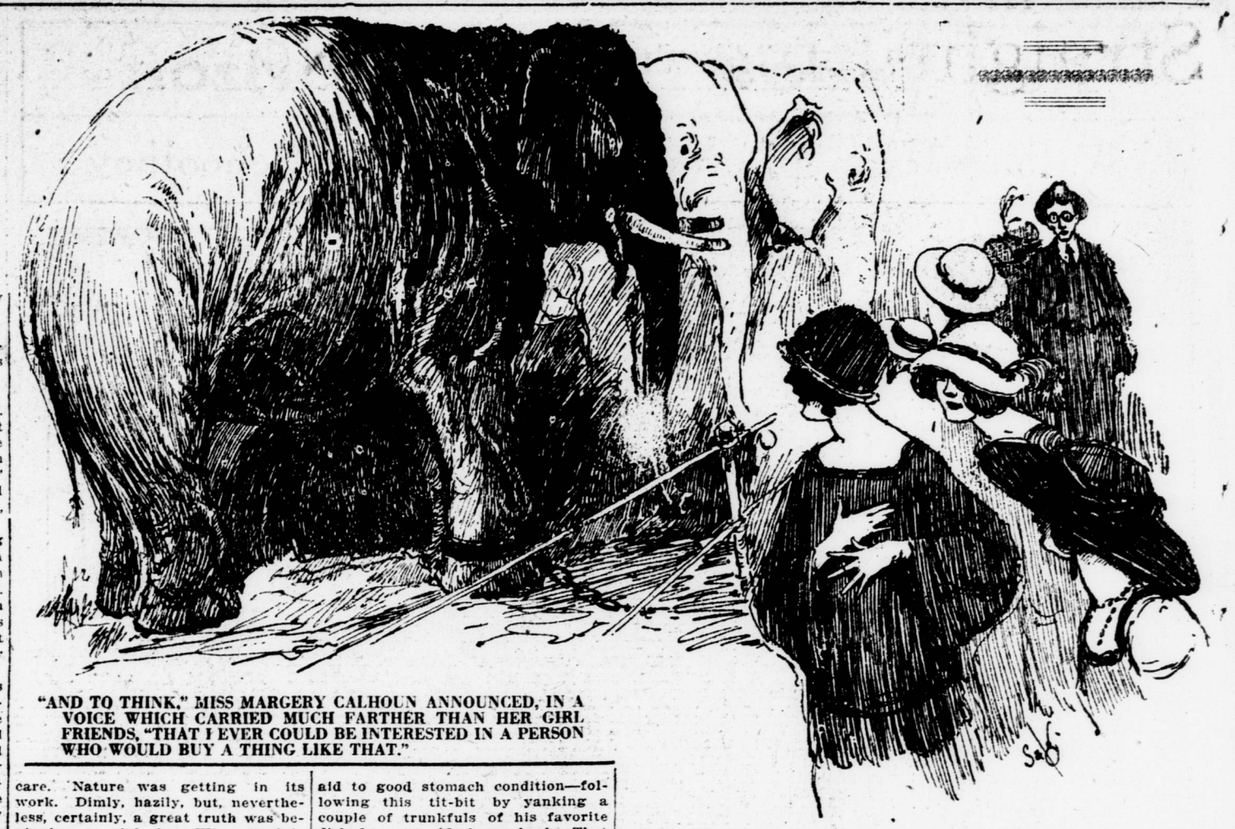
Tonnage, Preferred

BY COURTNEY RYLEY COOPER.

How the Ownership of an Elephant Interfered With the Affairs of a Young Couple Just Engaged to be Married.



"AND TO THINK," MISS MARGERY CALHOUN ANNOUNCED, IN A VOICE WHICH CARRIED MUCH FARTHER THAN HER GIRL FRIENDS, "THAT I EVER COULD BE INTERESTED IN A PERSON WHO WOULD BUY A THING LIKE THAT."

IT'S just about as easy for an elephant to hide his light under a bushel as it is for a human being. Jumbo did it, for instance, and when they lifted the four-peck measure from Jumbo's calcium he became the beacon light of all elephantdom. Before that he had been merely a 16,000-pound hulk that played with the children each Saturday at the London zoological garden. Opportunity, in the shape of Mr. Barnum's press agents, had to batter down Jumbo's door before the big consignment of elephant flesh became worth his weight in notoriety. Likewise Beelgie.

When the biggest show in the world says it has the biggest elephant in the world the public is going to believe it. When the smallest show tries to spring something of the kind it simply doesn't get over. Which explains the fact that while for twenty-odd years Beelgie had formed the greater bulk of the menagerie of the Hame & Howard Twice Renowned Wagon Shows, the only dent the elephant had been able to make had been in the country roads which he traversed for twenty or thirty miles each night. Yet Beelgie was even bigger than Jumbo!

Bill Hame had purchased him as "punk," or youngster, when he gave no other promise than that of having an extraordinary appetite. Hame & Howard had fed him well, and Beelgie's physique had responded, until at last he townered, like some animated freight car, in the small, patch menagerie of the twice renowned, a formidable figure and a more formidable feeder.

Beelgie led an active life. He put the show on the lot in the morning, he helped "tear down" at night. His big hulk flopped here and there to the completion of the hundred and ones chores which can bob up about a short-handed, element-handicapped circus.

It all had resulted in a sort of endless cycle. The long walks of the night and the almost constant work of the show lot gave him a wonderful appetite. The appetite gave him flesh, the flesh demanded food, the food meant more poundage. And so it went—a pachydermic ring-around-the-rosey which had a tremendous effect on the hay and brand appropriation, but little elsewhere. Beelgie was fat and bulging and well fed and happy. He snoozed most of the time during the performance. He was built for duty, not pleasure. At this point of joyous contentment there enters Mr. Greer.

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MR. GREER was a press agent for the World's Greatest—ninety-five full-length cars, 1,000 people, 750 horses, five heards of ponderous pachyderms and a three-mile spectacle of glittering street pageantry each morning at 10:30 sharp, rain or shine. Which announcements were not Mr. Greer's, but merely a courtesy on his part to the traditions of circusdom. Mr. Greer, rather, was of the new school of press agents—quiet clothing, horn-rimmed glasses, excellent education and connections—the kind of man who could wear a tuxedo on opening night at the Coliseum and still retain the friendship of the boss of the elephant herd.

It was by accident that Mr. Greer found Beelgie—a chance visit to see what a wagon show was like. Once having seen, the astute brain of Mr. Greer seethed with activity. Could Beelgie be purchased? He could. The Hame & Howard show immediately had an attachment in the shape of a young man in horn-rimmed glasses, who trailed the aggregation for the next four days, meanwhile telegraphing frantically, conferring with his banker over the long-distance telephone, disappearing to argue with the old man of the World's Greatest, to sign a contract, disappear again, borrow money, sign notes, rush once more to the Hame & Howard show, and then, at last, to put in a $4.50 long-distance call. Finally the connection.

"Hello-hello, Margery!"

"Yes. Oh, Larry, what's the matter? Why are you——"

"Matter?" Mr. Larry Greer smiled happily into the phone. "Nothing's the matter. We're fixed for life!"

"Oh! Really? Then they gave you the raise?"

"Better than that. We don't need any raise. We can fix the date any time we want to now. I've fallen into an investment that pays 50 per cent a year—a hundred dollars a week, every week! How's that, honey?"

"Oh!" There was a note of vague uncertainty about the voice. "I—I—don't quite understand. Larry, you haven't bought oil stock?"

"Oil stock nothing!" It was the big moment. "I've bought an elephant!"

"A—what"

"Elephant—elephant! You know—elephant! Biggest elephant in the world. Stands eleven feet four inches at the ridge of the backbone—a third of a foot higher than Jumbo. Get that? Weighs nearly eight and a half tons. Got Jumbo licked to a standstill. I've leased him out to the World's Greatest—a hundred dollars a week."

"But, Lawrence—where on earth did you get the money?"

"Money? Why, I had it. That and a couple of thousand dollars I borrowed."

"You mean—our money? That we were going to put into the house?"

"Well——"

"Lawrence! You didn't take that house money? Oh, you couldn't have done that!"

"Why—why not?"

"But we were going to buy the house with that! We can't live in an elephant!"

"No; but we can live on him, can't we? Now"—Mr. Greer dropped a dollar and a half in the slot at the dictation of central—"maybe you don't understand this thing. I'll go over it again. I've bought Beelgie, the biggest elephant in the world. Paid ten thousand dollars for him. Then I went to the old man and explained what an awful thing it would be for his competitors, that already have one 15,000-pound elephant, to get hold of this one and be able to advertise the biggest pair of pachyderms in captivity. Are you listening?"

"Yes," frigidly. "Go on."

"All right. After that I got a contract from the old man, whereby I am paid $100 a week, fifty-two weeks of the year, for the right to exhibit Beelgie as long as he is the biggest elephant on earth. Can't you understand?"

"And you've spent all our money?"

"Our?" There was a refined asperity about Mr. Greer. "I don't see where it was our money. I made it and saved it, didn't I?"

"Yes; but it was going into our house."

"Well, it's gone into our elephant now. This was the chance of a lifetime. We can buy a house any old time——"

"What with?"

"Why, with—with the money we make off of Beelgie. Don't you see? A hundred dollars a week—five thousand dollars a year—fifty per cent on our investment——"

"Suppose he gets sick or dies?"

"Oh, listen, Margery! Be sensible. Why should Beelgie want to die?"

"How do I know. But they do, don't they?"

"No, they don't. Live to be seventy-five and eighty years old. Besides, I put into the contract that the circus can't work him or endanger his health. So there's that. As for the price I paid, I can sell him for three times that much any old time——"

"Then, for heaven's sake, Lawrence, go and do it! Sell him——"

"But I can't!"

"You just said you could."

"I know I did, and I can—when it's really put over that he's the biggest on earth. But I've got to get the advertising first, and I can't pay for it myself."

"Well, I don't think you've acted very fair. You at least could have consulted me about it——"

"Didn't have time, Margery. I had to put this deal over, and do it quick."

"And is this the way things are going to be? Start out in the morning to buy a ton of coal and come home with a wagonload of turkeys?"

"Oh, now, be sensible!"

"That's just it, Lawrence Greer—I am being sensible. You're the one! I'd like to know if there's anything more foolish than to save your money for three years to buy a house and then put it all in an elephant!"

"Now, for goodness sake, Margery, be reasonable. Figure it out for yourself. Elephants live to be seventy-five years old. Beelgie's only about twenty. That's fifty years at five thousand dollars a year—three-quarters of a million dollars on a ten thousand dollar investment!"

"Oh, it sounds nice."

"Well, doesn't it?"

"Yes." Then, acidly: "If this—this thing doesn't die. Or somebody else doesn't come along with an elephant that's twice as big as he is. Or——"

"Now, just a minute there, Margery. I wasn't foolish, and I wasn't——"

"Time's up, mister! Drop another dollar and a half if you wish to— —"

Somewhat grudgingly, Mr. Greer fished in a pocket for the necessary coins, only to halt. A decision had come from the other end of the wire, somewhat tearful, but exceedingly definite:

"Never mind, central. I—I think the conversation's over."

LATE that night Mr. Greer left town via Pullman, while Beelgie, pop-eyed and shimmying with fear, followed by freight. A month later the picture of Beelgie, all 16,800 pounds of him, was on twenty-eight-sheet stands adorning the billboards three weeks in advance of the World's Greatest. Mr. Greer—when he wasn't writing unavailing letters to St. Louis—was pounding the typewriter for the newspapers about the size, weight, history and dimensions of the only elephant in the world that was bigger than Jumbo. Car managers, lithograph companies, banner squarers, program distributors, bill-posters, official announcers and bull tenders—all were on the job to make Beelgie the most famous elephant in America.

But with Beelgie the whole blamed thing was a washout. He was unhappy,—woefully, terribly unhappy—since he had come into the great, rushing universe of the World's Greatest, where everything ran on schedule, where tremendous cars formed the night abode of himself and a score of other elephants, where his legs had taken on a sort of flabby weakness, where his back ached, and where he was afflicted with spots before his eyes, dizziness on arising, bad taste in the mouth and general sluggishness. Beelgie knew he was missing something. But what? That was beyond Beelgie.

So it was not long before the elephant superintendent and a worried-appearing Mr. Greer gathered in conference.

"That bull's sick," said the elephant man.

Mr. Greer looked suddenly over his glasses.

"Sick?" he asked. "You mean—sick?"

"Yeh—sick or somethin'. He ain't right. Ever notice—he don't take no interest in nothing'. Ain't got no appetite. Ain't got no pep. Ain't got no get-up an' go about him. He ain't right, I'm tellin' you—he ain't right."

"Could it be"—Mr. Greer was hoping against hope—"that he's just lonesome?"

"Yes, it could, but it ain't. Nope. It's somethin' else. In the first place, there ain't no reason for him bein' lonesome. Over there he was th' only bull there was. Here he's got a whole flock o' bulls to keep him company. Besides, if he was lonesome he'd kick on me handlin' him, wouldn't he? Want his old trainer or somethin' like that. But he don't kick on nothin'; don't get interested enough in nothin' t' make a row about it. Just th' trouble—don't take no interest in his food, don't take no interest in th' rest o' th' bulls, don't take no interest in th' crowd or nobody. Th' worst of it is, he's fallin' off. That bull's lost a couple o' hundred pounds."

"Huh? How much?"

"Couple o' hundred—maybe three. I don't know. But he's losin' weight—droppin' it off by th' armload. Look it—see there? He's saggin'!"

Mr. Greer admitted it against his will. The leathery hide was loose and overlapping. There were about him the faint appearances of gauntness. Mr. Greer moistened his lips.

"Have—have you tried medicine on him?"

"Not yet. Just been figurin' t' feed him up, but it don't work. Guess I'll have t' begin dosin' him."

"Yes—yes, I think I would." Mr. Greer managed to find a ten-dollar bill and passed it forth. "Yes. I'd dose him up—a tonic or something. Plenty of it."

"Oh, yeh, I'll do that, all right."

The bull-man yelped for his assistants. A bugle had sounded in the distance. In ten minutes more Beelgie, attired in a crown of cut glass and ostrich plumes and a red plush howdah—"howdy," it's called in the circus—would bear the Queen of Sheba around the hippodrome track at the head of the tournament, or opening entry. The head bull tender passed on with Mr. Greer's ten dollars. Mr. Greer passed on with his sorrows, public and secret. Beelgie remained behind to grieve alone.

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FOR Beelgie wasn't his old self at all. He had no appetite. How was he to know that what he wanted was exercise? How was he to reason that when an elephant has put in the best years of his youth in dragging a circus from one town to another, pushing wagons, carrying poles and seat plans and grand stand jacks, and a few dozen other things, he simply can't fade out of the picture without suffering the consequences?

Now he did nothing but shamble around the hipprodrome track with the Queen of Sheba sitting up there in the howdy and showing her gold teeth, or trotting a few steps to the cars each night, after the show was over.

Mr. Greer had seen the elephant only while on exhibition. He knew nothing of Beelgie's private life. He therefore had brought no information with his gigantic purchase. All he could do was to stand by and watch the head bull-man pour castor oil by the gallon down Beelgie's rapidly thinning throat.

Besides, Mr. Greer wasn't exactly at his best these days. His letter writing had not been without its misfortunes. After a week or so of fruitless watching at the post office Mr. Greer found that he had plenty of time to throw his every effort into his work as the personal representative to an elephant.

But day by day, in every way, Beelgie grew worse instead of better; each morning found his trumpet call more piteous. Day by day—then, a new element entered, the old man.

"Hearing a lot of kicks on Beelgie," he announced shortly, one morning, as he and Mr. Greer stood in review before the disconsolate hulk.

"In—in what way?"

"Every kind of way. Woman stopped me yesterday and asked me why we didn't feed that elephant."

"Oh!"

"Yeh. Seemed to think we're starving him on purpose. How much has he lost now—a half a ton?"

Mr. Greer sighed.

"No?" The old man grunted. "Well—I don't guess we'd better, at least, not when there's any of these spies for the American Mastodon Shows around. I've got a tip on 'em."

"Oh!" Some way, Mr. Greer had lost his usual flow of language. "You've got a tip?"

"Yeh. They're feeding that big bull of theirs about eight times a day. Somebody's been sending 'em the dope on how Beelgie's falling off. Figure to get their elephant to weigh more than ours, and then give us the ringdown. A short, fat elephant always looks bigger'n a tall skinny one.

He gazed at the now cadaverous Beelgie, while Mr. Greer gazed intently in the other direction. The situation was getting a bit beyond control. Mr. Greer's contract read for a hundred dollars a week only so long as Beelgie remained the biggest elephant in the world. There was nothing in that contract to say how this bigness should be determined. Height? Beelgie had that all right. Weight? It was slipping. Public sentiment—there was the deadly wallop! For the public would go to see the elephant which looked the biggest.

To add to the distress of everything, the circus was approaching St. Louis. Once there, Mr. Greer knew exactly what Margery would do. More, when St. Louis finally arrived, she did it!

Not that she said a word to Mr. Greer. He was entirely beneath her. She talked instead to her girl friends, whom she brought to the circus, and assembled before Beelgie, entirely ignoring the well dressed young gentleman who fluffed in the background. Of course, it had to be one of those times when Beelgie's visage was at its sourest—just after he had been made the recipient of a gallon of stomach bitters.

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THERE he stood, only a shell of his former self. His hide bagged at the knees. The curl was gone from his trunk. Under his glassy eyes were pouches of skin for which there was no earthly use, since the flesh which once had held them up had departed. In places along Beelgie's sides the ribs showed evidence of a desire to come out and look at the scenery. He had fallen away from a majestic eight and a half tons to a mere mass of some fifteen thousand and a quarter. In fact, and without prejudice, as the world's most ponderous pachyderm Beelgie right then was a tremendous flop.

"And to think," Miss Margery Calhoun announced, in a voice which carried much farther than her girl friends, "that I ever could be interested in a person who would buy a thing like that!"

Then she passed blithely on. Blankly Mr. Greer stared after her, then moved on out to the front door.

A week passed. Ten days more. The circus journeyed into the south, while rumors journeyed to the circus.

As for Beelgie himself, things were approaching a climax. It so happened that the head bull-man decided that Beelgie needed rest and cut him out of parade.

Piteously, because some stirring instinct within him called for that bit of exercise, Beelgie raised his trunk and chirruped, when the bands began to play and the long parade moved off the lot without him. The boss elephant man misunderstood entirely and walloped Beelgie on the beezer. Beelgie had hated the medicine, but he had taken it. Beelgie had looked upon the boss bull-man as a sort of professional tormentor, but he had abided him. But now, after all he had suffered, to be goofed on the proboscis! It saddened his whole day. It was a hot day, sultry, with the threat of storm.

All afternoon the sidewalling was raised, that the menagerie might have the benefit of every breeze. All afternoon, as Beelgie looked into the distance, something stirred uneasily within the heavy armor of his skull.

Evening came and with it the chant of the guying-out crews, preparing the tent against the possible havoc of a night storm. Beelgie didn't care. Nature was getting in its work. Dimly, hazily, but, nevertheless, certainly, a great truth was beginning to sink in. What Beelgie needed and wanted and must have—was exercise!

Stronger and stronger the urge grew. From the dressing tent came the warning for tournament. The boss bull-keeper and his assistants hurried forward, decorated Beelgie with his ostrich plume crown and loaded his back with the howdy.

The bullkeepers rushed to the other side of the tent, there to hitch the twin baby elephants to their rose-entwined cart, and then help out the lion tamer, who'd been clawed up a bit and who couldn't get into his uniform. The Queen of Sheba sauntered in from the ladies' dressing tent, chatted a moment with the giraffe keeper, borrowed a cigarette and hid behind a lion's cage for a couple of inhalations. Beelgie didn't care. Beelgie had made a tremendous discovery.

He had lifted the leg to which his picket-chain was attached—and found that with the strain there had come a certain unwonted feeling of looseness; the fastening seemed to sag on his ankle. Beelgie tried it again—and the defective link bent farther. For a third time—then, crown, howdy and all, Beelgie slaunched back and pulled.

It was enough. A clink and Beelgie's bonds dropped from place. Five minutes later, when the Queen of Sheba moved forward to take her usual place, she discovered she had been left flat—Beelgie was gone!

Gone, trotting joyously, happily toward the open country. The night was dark, with the exception of the first faint flashes of threatening lightning—but that didn't worry Beelgie. He wouldn't have gone around fences any way. Now, his crown tilted in a rakish manner, his empty howdy bobbing, he crossed the railroad track, slid down the embankment, stilled the frog chorus by sloshing through the marsh and then, half his howdy hanging on a too-low limb, frolicked onward in the glorious knowledge that once again he was in the wide-open places where an elephant could be an elephant!

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MILES passed—for an elephant is a far swifter beast than the ordinary person imagines. Horses and cows, dozing in dreamy pastures, came out of their lethargy to find something akin to a seven-room house approaching from the distance and to fly, snorting and bawling, out of its path. Pigs squealed. Chickens squawked and fluttered as Beelgie passed through their domain, taking most of it with him. Farmers poked their heads out of windows and phoned for the aid of neighbors. Beelgie went blissfully on, while the more frequently recurring flashes of lighting disclosed a beautiful path of wreckage.

Ten miles and he began to tire a bit. His ostrich plume crown was cocked at a full Bowery angle and his howdy, where once the Queen of Sheba had shown her fourteen-karat teeth, little more than a mangled platform on his back. His pace slowed; he stopped to eat a few pecks of soft dirt—there is nothing that an elephant loves more as an aid to good stomach condition—following this tit-bit by yanking a couple of trunkfuls of his favorite dish from an elderberry bush. That little turn of exercise had brought again the old, the fulsome appetite!

He wandered through an orchard, stripping the limbs of juicy apples and crowding them down by the trunkload. He saw a light and moseyed to the window, there to stare within, while a family suddenly departed by the openings on the other side of the house and squawked for assistance.

Beelgie ignored the action. He didn't know what it was all about and he was thirsty. He wandered through the farmyard, leaning against a fence, then going on through. The thunder had begun to rumble by this time, but Beelgie ignored that also. He had smelled something.

Something he had smelled before, back in those good old days on the Hame and Howard, before they gave paregoric to an elephont when he got the colic, dosing him instead with a quart or two of Old Crow to help him out of his misery. There were the beginnings right now of that condition which an elephant hates worse than anything else. Those apples—and that elderberry bush! Evidently they hadn't mixed. Beelgie was beginning to swell.

He needed something to heat up his stomach and he halted in the midst of a mass of barrels and copper utensils and coiled tubing dimly revealed in the remains of an outbuilding. Beelgie unfurled his trunk and dipped it uncertainly into a barrel of corn mash. He tasted and rolled his eyes. Then he tasted again. Down went the trunk, deep into the barrel—food and drink at once!

For fifteen minutes he pulled hard, absorbed thoroughly, and then, unmindful of wind or rain or storm or circus or Mr. Greer or anything else, he moved a bit uncertainly, wiggled his trunk as though to assure himself that it still was there and, a queer blankness about his actions, looked about him for new fields and newer accomplishments.

Far away, excited animal-men scoured the countryside and strove to follow a trail of wreckage. Back on the circus grounds drenched workmen slathered through the mud of a bad gumbo lot, while superintendents groaned with the knowledge that the performance was only half over and that, long before the big top could be lowered, every wagon would be hub-deep in sticky, black clay, especially since the first section, carrying the elephants, had departed before the storm broke.

Telephone calls were traveling frantically over singing wires, as the blank-eyed Mr. Greer strove, half-dazed, to find out just where his loose-skinned investment had gone, and how high the damage was running. Down in his private car the Old Man rummaged wildly in his safe for a certain contract, that he might read it again and set his mind at rest.

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BEELGIE paused in his rounds of the deserted farm, realized dimly that he was getting wet, and moved uncertainly toward the vague outlines of a long shed, open on both sides.

It was just high enough to admit his head. His glassy eyes had fastened on a dim line of small, white boxes which jiggled uncertainly before him. Beelgie extended his trunk, sniffed, paused, sniffed again, and then smashed the box. Honey!

Gobs of honey! But when he gathered up the first trunkload of it something interfered. A million somethings, which entered the soft end of his trunk, turned around, pushed hard, then flew away again; which settled on his tender flanks and on the thin-skinned expanses behind his ears, where formerly only fleas had dwelt, and there put forth their every effort. Beelgie squealed. He smashed another box, this time for spite. It only made matters worse. Then Beelgie lit out.

When he came to half-way clear understanding of things, he was in a small forest which lined a murky stream. The storm had settled into a steady rain.

Beelgie's head ached, his trunk ached, his mouth was swollen, and he was cold, distressed—and lonely! Things never had happened like this back in the old days. There everything had been enjoyable, companionable——

That was it, companionable! Vaguely, it penetrated Beelgie's throbbing cupola that he wanted companionship—some one who could lead him through the rain-wet fields and along the soft roads, and at the same time give him protection. He sloshed up the muddy bank of the stream, shimmying with the chill of the storm-cooled night, wandered listlessly here and there, stumbled over a log, and then——

Something flared out of the night, jumped at him, roared with the noise of a thousand tornadoes, then went crashing on into the darkness, while Beelgie cut a new path for himself through the woods, cleared his back of the howdy and then suddenly halted. After all, that thing had a familiar sound—something which connected his muddled mind with happenings which now seemed far away. It was the same sort of noise which kept him awake all night; the noise of a train. A train, to Beelgie, meant folks; folks meant the circus, and the circus, right now meant company! He leaned against a tree and scratched thoughtfully. Then, with the joy of the wanderer homeward bound, he sashayed out of the forest, climbed the slight embankment to the railroad track and started happily along in the direction which the freight train had taken.

Miles and more miles, in which nothing happened. Wearily, Beelgie put his trunk in the air, sniffed long and carefully, and chirruped uncertainly. Then his trunk curled high, and a shrieking trumpet call shrilled the announcement of a joyous discovery. Faintly, from far away, his sensitive nostrils had caught the scent of cat-animals. Out ahead somewhere——!

He plunged forward feverishly. Lights appeared. Carbides—the moving forms of men and horses? Beelgie wheeled from the railroad tracks, scattered a half hundred shadowy watchers, flopped into a muddy ditch, flopped out again, and then, at the edge of the circus lot, halted, once again to raise his trunk and to trumpet with a call almost of triumph!

For an old, happy thing was before Beelgie.

Here was a circus stuck in the mud, just like the Hame & Howard was wont to be stuck in the mud, when every one yelled for Beelgie. Before him was a pole wagon, sunk to its bed. A bit of a hoochie-koochie movement came into Beelgie's hind quarters. His high shoulders began to jazz. His head swung with an old, a confident movement. Disdaining the shouting workmen, he walked through ropes, piles of canvas, lowered his big head, heaved his shoulders, snorted, roared, squealed, bellowed—and pushed the wagon out of the mud!

Far across the lot was another vehicle, literally swimming in gumbo. More work! Knee-deep in mud, he went on, to scramble, to slip about in the slime, to squeal and once more bring a wagon to safety. It was about this time that the Old Man started to roar orders.

"Hey—lay off on them horses. Let Beelgie do it—and, listen you!" He halted the mud-caked lot superintendent. "Tell the trainmaster in the morning that I want one elephant car hooked on the second section, not to go out till the big top's off the lot. See what he got us into tonight by pulling out with all the bulls and not leaving us nothing for a pinch? Except, of course, Beelgie here—and he never knew what he was doing."

Nor did Beelgie care. Beelgie was himself again, hard at work and happy. The Old Man yelped to a pony punk:

"Grab a horse somewhere and light out and find them menagerie men. Tell 'em we've found that bull. And if you see that press agent, tell him I've got the dope on what's been wrong with Beelgie."

The Old Man stood in the darkness and grinned. A week later——"

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IT was dawn. The steel runways of the World's Greatest had clattered to the ground a half hour before, while the door of an elephant car had opened and a tremendous hulk, whose sides already were beginning to fill out at the request of an enormous appetite, slid forth, trumpeted a greeting to the morning, bowed his head for the adjustment of a rope harness and then shuffled down the line of flats to the loading out ways. There the pull-up teams had placed six wagons in a line, while hurrying skinners, or teamsters, had chained them in position. Beelgie one-stepped into place.

"Mule up!" shouted the boss bull-man, and Beelgie obeyed, squealing as he strained at the getaway, then shambling happily as the wagons began to trundle behind him. On the curbing a young man in horn-rimmed glasses turned somewhat anxiously to his companion.

"Er—er—boss, have you thought over that proposition?"

"Me?" The Old Man grumbled, as was his habit. "Yeh—too deuced high, the way it stands. The damages were ten thousand."

Mr. Greer of the World's Greatest swallowed hard.

"Yes, of course, I realize that. But then, we've really got to do something. I saw a lawyer, like you wanted me to do, and the contract's all smashed to pieces."

"Huh?" The Old Man turned with sudden interest. Mr. Greer went innocently on:

"Yes, that line where it says that the World's Greatest agrees not to work Beelgie or to in any manner endanger his state of health. Now, if you work him, you break the contract, and if you don't work him you endanger his state of health. So——"

"Well," the Old Man cleared his throat, "what's the answer? That if I don't take him at your figure, now that you've found out how to keep him in shape, you'll go over to the American Mastodon with him? 'Specially since I was the one who got hep to what was wrong?"

Mr. Greer pursed his lips.

"Well, I want to do the square thing, boss. You'd leased Beelgie. The lawyer says you'll have to be responsible for the damages. So I thought I'd be a regular fellow and knock off for that—and just make it forty thousand——"

The Old Man cleared his throat—and young Mr. Greer halted immediately. For a long moment the Old Man stared at the receding form of a big elephant dragging six circus wagons to the show lot. Far into the distance the early morning cavalcade progressed, to round a corner and disappear. The Old Man turned back to his companion.

"Too much," he growled. "Give you thirty-five. Take it or leave it. Check by 10 o'clock if you say so——"

A minute later the Old Man stood alone. A young man was running wildly down the street to a telephone exchange, to scramble up the stairs, then to lean, somewhat frantically, toward the waiting long-distance operator.

"Get me St. Louis," he panted. "Kinloch eight oh, eight six six—Miss Margery Calhoun. And for the love of Pete, rush it!"

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BEELGIE LOWERED HIS BIG HEAD, HEAVED HIS SHOULDERS, BELLOWED—AND PUSHED THE WAGON OUT OF THE MUD.

"The Galley."

WHEN the yacht puts out to sea or the dining car starts on its run, it is nowadays able to cook more and better food in less space than formerly because of the ingenious alcohol range in the galley. The range has a vertical boiler which heats to a temperature of 450 degrees and which will broil thick steak in ten minutes. A thermometer on the outside tells when the temperature is high enough to do the required work.

Each unit of the stove can be used separately, so that the camper or the automobilist can take as large a stove as he desires, and the yacht can be equipped with one that will just fill the space devoted to it in the galley. The Pullman stove, as adopted by one road, has five compartments, including a plate warmer, and occupies a space in the galley of eighteen by twenty-seven inches.

The burners make the alcohol into gas before it is lighted and the fuel consumption is reduced from 25 to 40 per cent below that of ordinary alcohol stoves. Heretofore practically the only way steaks could be cooked in such limited quarters as those of a dining-car galley was with a hot plate over an alcohol flame, and that was never satisfactory.